

**From:** [Miller, Garyg](#)  
**To:** [Delgado, Stephanie](#)  
**Cc:** [Sanchez, Carlos](#); [Walters, Donn](#); [Foster, Anne](#); [Durant, Jennah](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Furr High School Student Letters  
**Date:** Tuesday, March 01, 2016 4:06:00 PM

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Stephanie,

Please final this in letter format; I'll bring the names & addresses to you.

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Thank you for your letter regarding the San Jacinto [River](#) Waste Pits Superfund Site. We share your concerns about the contaminants in the [river](#) and in the fish.

Although there has not been a decision yet on the final cleanup [plan for the site](#), there has been progress. For example, a temporary armor cap [was built over](#) the pits in 2011 [to prevent](#) the paper mill dioxin wastes from washing into the river and [to isolate](#) the pits from people who were fishing there. An EPA Dive Team inspection in December 2015 found a damaged area in an underwater part of the cap, and EPA directed the Potentially Responsible Parties to repair it. The repairs were completed in early January 2016. Sample results from EPA show waste material containing dioxins was exposed due to damage to the armored cap. Sample results from the surrounding undisturbed areas of the cap did not show elevated levels of waste materials containing dioxins.

The EPA has directed the Potentially Responsible Parties to improve site safety by installing a lighted warning buoy system around the temporary cap as well as a camera system that will be monitored 24 hours per day and 7 days per week.

Finding out where the contamination is and how it may have moved has taken up much of the time. The next step is developing a good cleanup plan for all of the site. Currently, the EPA is working with the U.S. Corps of Engineers to perform an independent review of the site, river conditions, and cleanup alternatives. The Corps of Engineers will also complete an investigation of the recently discovered and repaired damaged area of the cap. Once these are completed, the EPA will announce a proposed alternative that will be available for public comment and will also host a public meeting during the comment period to allow public participation in the remedy selection process. The announcement of the proposed plan is scheduled for the end of this year. The Potentially Responsible Parties who produced the paper mill waste and who transported it to the site are paying for and performing the investigation and cleanup under EPA direction and oversight. Concentrations of dioxins in the fish near the site should start to decrease with the temporary cap in place and with implementation of the final permanent remedy decision. Unfortunately, fish advisories throughout



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the San Jacinto River will likely remain in place due to contamination from dioxins and PCBs from other sources.

We have heard from residents who believe their health problems are a direct result of the dioxin waste that has been identified in the pits. We understand that people are concerned about this issue and have a lot of questions. Several agencies, both state and federal, have been looking into the potential risk of exposure from the site.

Short term exposures to high levels of dioxin may result in skin lesions, such as chloracne and patchy darkening of the skin, and altered liver function. Long-term or chronic exposure has been linked to changes in the immune system or the body's ability to fight disease, reproductive and developmental defects in children whose mothers are exposed during pregnancy, an increased risk for developing type 2 diabetes, and an increased risk of developing cancer.

However, these health problems can also be caused by many factors. For instance, cancer is not a single disease, meaning that everyone's cancer is [not](#) the same. It is really many different types of diseases that vary in the causes or origins. Cancers are most likely caused by a combination of many genetic, lifestyle, environmental, and other risk factors. If you would like additional information [on health issues](#), [please](#) contact the Texas Department of State Health Services at 512-776-2932.

Sincerely,

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